



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Minutes of Regular Meeting of June 5, 2019
City Council Chambers, One Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Block, Foehr, Fox, Lyford, Michaels, Mittelstadt

Commissioners Absent: Cotten

Youth Commissioners Present: Dai, Sanders

Staff Present: Parks and Recreation Director Shearer, Office Assistant II Gonzalez

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Chair Michaels

COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS / AGENDA AMENDMENTS

Commissioner Foehr shared that the Volunteer Committee met and discussed starting small by deputizing people in specific volunteer areas, then kicking off with a bigger volunteer event in the fall. In the meantime, committee members are researching how other agencies process volunteers. Commissioner Michaels suggested integrating use of the MyBelmont app.

Commissioner Mittelstadt announced the Summer Concert Series begins Sunday, June 16, 1-4pm.

Director Shearer announced on behalf of Commissioner Cotten that he attended the Senior Advisory Meeting. They reviewed recent and upcoming events and he was pleased with senior program staff.

Commissioner Michaels suggested moving the Belmont Community Center Project Update to the top of the agenda to accommodate several members of the public in attendance. None opposed.

CONSENT CALENDAR

May 1, 2019 Draft Minutes

Commissioner Block clarified when mentioning the potential pump track location, he meant the top of the Lake Trail, not near Hallmark.

ACTION: With this one change, on a motion by Commissioner Lyford seconded by Commissioner Mittelstadt the minutes were unanimously approved.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Belmont Community Center Project Update

Commissioner Foehr recused herself from the discussion because she owns property within the project's vicinity.

Director Shearer introduced Group 4 Architecture representatives Dawn Merkes and Kaifeng Zhang.

Merkes said the needs assessment and site evaluation were completed; this information was then integrated into the program options and site strategies now being presented. Round Two public outreach will continue throughout the summer and Group 4 plans to present a design recommendation ready to City Council in November.

Zhang summarized outreach to date. The Round One survey received 2,030 online responses as well as in-person surveys collected at events including the Girls' Softball Opening, a Staff Workshop, a Community Advisory Meeting, Earth Day, and the Egg Adventure Hunt. Zhang reviewed respondents' demographics and preferences.

Merkes presented national planning standards for community centers' square foot per capita. Compared to other cities on the peninsula, Belmont ranked on the lower side, therefore the Base Plan incorporates a 25,000 square foot building with 95 parking spaces. Both outdoor and indoor spaces would be updated but include similar elements to current, with an additional lounge and reception area, fitness and wellness studio, conference room, and splash pad. For Round Two, Group 4 is now looking to select three out of five enhancements that would fit on the site. Based on Round One surveys, the top five potential site enhancements included a gymnasium, an outdoor pool, a community room, and a recreational or competition ice skating rink. Merkes mentioned the Community Advisory Committee and Planning Commission both ranked a gymnasium, outdoor pool, and community room in their top three.

Merkes reviewed the site analysis and stated the Community Advisory Committee and design team both favored building the community center on the Ralston side of the property and placing the field along Belburn. In this configuration, the parking could be placed along either the east or the west side of the property, running all the way through from Ralston to Belburn; City traffic engineers are looking at impacts to car and pedestrian access. The Community Advisory Committee and Planning Commission both advised increasing the size of the dog park as well.

Commissioners took a break to look at the presentation boards of the potential site options.

The Commission reconvened and commissioners shared clarifying questions.

- In response to Commissioner Block, Merkes confirmed heating and staffing a year-round pool was not as cost-effective as using it exclusively in the warmer months. Commissioner Block suggested rooftop solar panels for additional cost recovery. Commissioner Mittelstadt inquired about a wind-proof retractable pool roof.
- In response to Commissioner Fox, Merkes said three of the proposed classrooms combined would be about the size of the current Multiuse Room.
- In response to Commissioner Mittelstadt, Director Shearer said artificial turf fields would be considered.
- In response to Commissioner Mittelstadt, Merkes said outdoor courts were still useful even with a gymnasium because they have multiple uses and are more conducive to drop-in use.
- In response to Commissioner Dai, Merkes said basic site elements were drawn to scale and keeping the parking along the same side as current would result in little to no cost savings.

- In response to Commissioner Sanders, Merkes said Group 4 would need to research the cost efficiency of a recreational versus competition ice rink. They have also discussed having seasonal outdoor ice rink.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Zhang said the square foot per capita table only included community centers; although libraries house many programs, they are typically in a separate category.
- Commissioner Michaels strongly encouraged increasing the dog park size to at least one acre and/or managing community expectations of this element.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Director Shearer stated the reception area would be staffed, but this would not become the primary site for administrative staff.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Merkes said internal turnarounds and safe traffic circulation would be incorporated into either parking lot design.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Merkes said their inclination was to move the community center closer to Ralston because they received feedback that the building was easy to miss from the street. Commissioner Michaels recommended getting the Police Department's input.
- Commissioner Michaels inquired about the cost of building per square foot as well as the pool's capacity. Merkes estimated the former and will look into the latter.
- In response to Commissioner Fox, Merkes gave several examples of gyms built below ground, which would result in some cost increases.
- In response to Commissioner Lyford, Merkes said a seasonal outdoor pool could operate with cost recovery, a gymnasium and community room could bring in revenue, and she would need to investigate the financial viability of an ice rink.

Community members shared their comments.

- Jonathan Gervais encouraged the Commission to use their imaginations and not being afraid of making big changes. He challenged them to consider why the community garden, three preschool classrooms, and a field of the same size should all be replaced. He said to consider placing the building in the middle of the property with a smaller field on either side or building two stories like local school districts or replacing Cipriani Dog Park with a dog park here. He mentioned high groundwater at this site could impact a sunken gymnasium and long-term operating costs should be considered. He also advised that incorporating aquatics as well as new site functions were critical for community buy-in.
- Joe McDonough expressed support for the project and urged the Commission to make this a significant building with good aesthetics, meet with neighbors regarding allowing through traffic to Belburn, consider a building design that protects the pool from the wind, and consider intuitive pedestrian paths linking Belburn to Carlmont Village.
- Sergey Sergeev urged the Commission to consider an ice rink, which could benefit all ages. He said this offered something new and innovative since gyms, basketball courts, and a pool could be found at local schools. He also asked that less space be allocated to parking or alternatives such as underground parking be considered.
- Sarah Feldman expressed support for an ice rink. She is a retired competitive figure skater who was also involved in building an ice rink in Santa Barbara County, so she offered to help. She asked the Commission to consider what city amenities are already available and realize that skating benefits all ages and abilities.

Commissioner Michaels encouraged people living close to the site to attend the neighbors meeting June 13, 6-7pm at the Barrett Community Center Annex. Director Shearer also stated neighbors within 1,000 feet of the site received a meeting notification in the mail.

Commissioners shared their comments.

- Commissioner Mittelstadt hoped to maintain and build upon the needs of the hundreds of people who currently use the site, including continuing to offer a preschool, community garden, and field upgraded to artificial turf. Merkes added that in a recent study, San Mateo County identified a deficit of preschool spaces in Belmont.
- Commissioner Mittelstadt agreed that the building should buffer the pool from wind. Commissioner Fox inquired about lowering the pool to buffer it from wind and Commissioner Michaels asked about a service charge and fencing/entry point for anyone entering the pool area. Commissioner Block said aquatics should be a top priority.
- Commissioner Lyford would like to see synthetic turf fields and loved the splash pad idea.
- In response to Commissioner Dai, Merkes said they would investigate seasonal winds.
- Commissioner Michaels inquired about incorporating outdoor walking paths.
- Commissioner Mittelstadt asked about moving the building away from adjacent homes, or at least considering blocked views or sun.
- In response to Commissioner Dai, Merkes said Group 4 will revisit the location, size, and noise impact of a dog park.
- Commissioner Block encouraged creative building design, maximizing space, building two stories, and ensuring inviting entrances on both sides. He also advocated for balancing community needs with revenue generation through the rental of classrooms. He would like to see solar panels and water conservation elements incorporated and used to educate students.
- Commissioner Block said too much space was allocated to parking and advocated for underground parking. Commissioner Mittelstadt warned against not offering enough parking, which would impact neighbors. Commissioner Michaels added the City should consider ridesharing options, incentives for ridesharing, and a Ralston bus loop. In response to Commissioner Lyford, Merkes said Belmont's geology doesn't pose a problem in building down, but costs would increase. In addition, surface parking could more easily transition to other uses in the future. Commissioner Michaels suggested transitioning parking to activity space during lower usage times.
- Commissioner Mittelstadt asked about the project phases since many decisions would be cost-driven. Director Shearer said only Phase One had been funded by City Council so far, which would provide conceptual designs by the end of the year. After determining costs, funding options could be explored. If needed, construction could also be done in phases.
- Commissioner Fox asked if a community room was necessary since there is already one in Twin Pines Park. Director Shearer advised that flexible spaces are a best practice, however the gymnasium could also serve as a community room if the playing surface was protected. Commissioner Michaels encouraged looking at the project as a community-wide enhancement and perhaps updating the Twin Pines community room instead of building a new one.
- Commissioner Michaels encouraged looking at opportunities to bring different user groups together throughout the site.

Commissioner Michaels announced a break, which beginning at 9:03pm.

The Commission reconvened at 9:12pm, with Commissioner Foehr rejoining the discussion.

Parks and Open Space Projects

Senior Parks Maintenance Worker Matt Ward gave a presentation summarizing the role of the parks division of the Parks & Recreation Department. He reviewed general areas of responsibility including parks and grounds, including playground maintenance and safety; open space; athletic fields (both City-owned and School District); building maintenance; medians and rights-of-way; tree maintenance; event preparation and support; volunteer coordination; project management; and working in partnership with contractors for Capital Improvement Projects. He mentioned the parks division consists of nine full-time staff who are versatile craftsmen who also serve as City ambassadors.

Commissioners shared their questions and comments.

- Commissioner Fox commented on what a great job the parks division does.
- Commissioner Foehr said they make great City ambassadors and asked how best to report an issue during regular work hours as well as after hours. Ward said during business it's best to call the park office or report the issue through Public Staff; after hours, it's best to call Public Works who has on-call emergency staff. Commissioner Michaels suggested posting this information in parks as well as using the MyBelmont app to report issues and receive updates. Ward confirmed staff follow up with residents who report issues in other ways as well.
- Commissioner Sanders said she especially appreciates the field maintenance.
- Commissioner Mittelstadt added staff should let the Commission know if they need additional resources.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Ward said the improvement he would most like to see is more efficient watering practices and potentially artificial turf. Ward also emphasized the importance of setting irrigation up correctly and said many of their irrigation issues are due to changes in field use over the years.

Ralston Avenue Corridor – Segments 1 and 2 Project

Justin Lai, Associate Engineer for City of Belmont, reviewed the project background, schedule, and construction impacts. Lai summarized the proposed improvements, which focus on pedestrian and bicycle access, including the new bike path through Twin Pines Park. He said the project contract was awarded, with an estimated start date of mid-June and duration of six months. All work within Twin Pines Park will occur after the culmination of summer programs. The project will result in some lane closures; however, businesses are remaining open and some nighttime work will help mitigate impacts.

Commissioners shared their questions and comments.

- Commissioner Block expressed support for adding more striping and green paint for bicyclists.
- In response to Commissioner Foehr, Director Shearer said the Twin Pines Master Plan has the bike path continue between the parking lot and Ralston. If the island in front of the Manor House was removed, there would be additional space to route the path back to Ralston.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Lai confirmed that the updated plan did not require westbound bikers to backtrack after crossing Ralston.
- In response to Commissioner Fox, Lai stated the exact construction schedule is up to the contractor and will be clarified within the week.
- In response to Commissioner Foehr, Lai said public outreach has included meetings and workshops with the public as well as business owners, information on the City website, updates in the City Manager's Weekly Update, and posts on NextDoor and Facebook. Commissioner Michaels suggested posting the project on the signboard at Ralston and South Road. Fox added it could go on the Police Department's electronic signboard. Foehr mentioned additional

signage generating excitement and Fox said these could include illustrations of the proposed improvements.

- Commission Mittelstadt confirmed with Lai that the sidewalk between Sixth Avenue and El Camino will be replaced and not just extended.
- In response to commissioner Dai, Lai said most affected roadways already have space for the upgraded bike lane, however some parking spaces will need to be removed.
- In response to Commissioner Fox, Lai confirmed that the \$882,000 was all for construction and was derived from San Mateo County's Measure A. Remaining funding is coming from the City.
- In response to Commissioner Michaels, Lai clarified some striping will route eastbound and westbound bikers along different roads due to space restrictions. Michaels suggested signage.
- Lai mentioned this was a condense presentation, but eventually all of Ralston will be striped for bicyclists and bike racks along the route have already been selected.

Commission Calendar

Director Shearer mentioned she was waiting to hear back from the Fire Marshall regarding whether a presentation will occur in July or September.

OTHER BUSINESS / UPDATES

Department Report

Director Shearer shared the Monthly Highlights including Camp SOAR enrollment was way ahead of last year; the preschool held their graduation; Commissioners can always contact Shearer if they want to attend any departments programs or events; the movies for Movies in the Park were selected; the Lodge has new lighting, flooring, and patio landscaping; Barrett now has an outdoor chess table; there is a new BBQ in the Meadow; the play structures are being installed at O'Donnell Park; the Interact Club and Belmont Rotary participated in a tree planting in Twin Pines Park; an Eagle Scout upgraded a bridge at Water Dog Lake; the Water Dog "Trail Keepers" have been conducting trail maintenance and made stickers to give to volunteers; the Department is looking to make similar stickers for other forms of volunteerism; the Summer Off-Leash Dog Hours Kick-Off will begin Saturday, June 15 at 6:30pm; City Manager Greg Scoles and Police Chief Dan DeSmidt are retiring; Tony Psaila was appointed as the new Police Chief; Afshin Oskui will be Interim City Manager; and Recreation Coordinator Jeffrey Giacoletto resigned in favor of a promotion closer to home.

ADJOURNMENT: 10:15 PM.

Brigitte Shearer
Parks and Recreation Director